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20 July 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Director of National Reconnaissance Office

SUBJECT: Remarks on NRO

1. At the end of one year tenure as Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office I wish to report my observations over this period. I do this in the hope that these remarks will be of some constructive value to my superiors and that they may help as a beginning step to a mutual understanding of our problems as I see them. First of all the situation vis-a-vis the NRO of a year ago was one of some discordant relationships plus a number of contentious issues as exemplified in Dr. Scoville's summary of the situation at the time. However, it was hoped by most of us that the revision of 13 March 1963 to the DOD/CIA agreement on NRO would correct the management and operating obstacles which Dr. Charyk noted in a summary of the NRO on his departure somewhat earlier. Roughly one year later it is my conclusion that the situation remains unchanged over all. Full personal rapport is lacking still, and while some issues have been resolved, others have not, and more have been added. I believe that not all of us have demonstrated in deeds, along with words, a unified understanding of why there is an NRO, what it should be, and how it should work. Until this is achieved and fully, honestly and sincerely supported by us all in a consistent fashion, I can see, at best, a mere continuance of an argumentative relationship.

2. It may be worth remembering that since the concept was advanced in 1961 there have been significant changes and amendments to the basic DOD/CIA agreement and an almost complete changeover in the highest level personnel has taken place. I do not presume to judge for my superiors on the question of why there is an NRO. I suggest that it is in the national interest for the appropriate officials to re-examine this and other related questions in full view of all pertinent facts. An agreed upon meeting of minds on these fundamentals is necessary so that the present intra-agency relations can be reaffirmed or modified as appropriate to the circumstances of today. The following remarks are made with the hope that they will contribute to such a mutual understanding.

NRO review(s) completed.

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3. With this in mind, it may be worth recalling that pre-NRO, the CIA had a useful record of U-2 development and operation; had a role of primacy in the CORONA program; and had launched a then promising new development in OXCART. It was sized for stringent security, had developed covert contracting techniques, and had a highly centralized and self-contained management group for these activities whose head reported directly to the Director of Central Intelligence and which conducted its business affairs under a policy unique in government-industry relations. The Air Force at this time focused its principal aerial reconnaissance efforts on developments in the SAMOS satellite program. At about the same time that the NRO began taking initial form, the highest officials in the Air Force directed the setting up of streamlined management and rigid security controls for reconnaissance satellite projects.

4. It may be of some importance to point out that the U-2 and CORONA were conceived in the beginning as short-term activities, each of no more than about one year expected duration. While certainly not outliving their usefulness, these operations have continued for much longer than originally expected. This prolongation of the CORONA program and the failure of successors to materialize from the SAMOS efforts, the continuance of U-2 operations for years beyond its initial expectations, and finally prolongation and expansion of the original OXCART program has given the original short-term extemporaneous role of the CIA in aerial reconnaissance a mantle of permanence.

25X1 5. The situation today is that the Air Force has produced the
25X1 [redacted] and taken over a dominant role, to say the least, in CORONA. The OXCART program has been expanded to include KEDLOCK, [redacted] and TAGBOARD under Air Force direction and these far overshadow the original program in a business sense. OXCART itself remains somewhat short of fruition. It is claimed, and probably correctly, that the Air Force has demonstrated an equal ability in security, covert contracting, and streamlined management. It is true also that the once unique management-operating component within CIA has lost some of its characteristics and is now within a more conventional institutional structure.

6. From all of this it can be argued that the contribution of CIA to covert aerial reconnaissance has been made, the lessons learned, the techniques perfected elsewhere in organizations better equipped to conduct large-scale continuing operations and highly complex developments. While this contribution has been made, nonetheless I do not accept the parochial corollary that the CIA role should revert to one of just looking at pictures.

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7. While undeniably the Air Force is very well able to conduct large-scale continuing reconnaissance operations with both satellites and aircraft I believe equally that the CIA has shown an adroitness in covert "hit and run" aircraft reconnaissance. So long as it remains politically expedient to be able to exploit plausible denial a non-military force of U-2 and OXCART or other reconnaissance aircraft allows for wider scope of maneuver and negotiation in the political arena with friendly, neutral, and even hostile governments.

8. In the business of operational planning of both aircraft and satellite reconnaissance missions some few individuals have developed a superior skill in recognizing subtle ways in which assets can be exploited better to get the product. By this I do not mean that competent operators cannot meet stated requirements; rather, that these few seem to recognize the need and opportunity for modest innovations which produce a little more than just what is asked for, thus broadening the scope of the intelligence analyst. These few individuals are characterized by experience in operations with both DOD and CIA and have a good feel for exploitation through their associations; however, not all who have served a tour with or who wear the badge of the CIA have acquired this broader operational frame of reference.

9. Earlier I pointed to present similarities in project management. There is one, perhaps important, omission. I do not believe that the unorthodox policy for government-industry relations mentioned earlier is well understood nor regarded within the DOD. While I see the CIA point of view changing on this as well, unless the tools to implement such a philosophy are preserved the government will lose the option for its employment where and only where such unorthodoxy is appropriate. The substance of which I speak here is defined better by others; it is understood well by only a few industrial managers and present and former government officials.

10. This leads me to ponder on whether the U-2, CORONA, and OXCART efforts could have occurred had there been an NRO of today's variety in existence in 1955-58. I think the answer must be in the negative, particularly when one includes the surrender of budgetary prerogatives for these activities by the CIA. The beginnings of each of these programs included very substantial funding by CIA. I feel safe in stating as fact that without the CIA there would have never been a U-2 program; the Air Force had already rejected this in favor of the B-57D. I am also as sure that there would never have been a CORONA program, at least of the character and in the time frame that it began, because of Air Force concentration on SAMOS. It was in

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fact a deliberate government decision to divorce what became CORONA from the SAMOS program so that it might be prosecuted more quickly and secretly under the philosophy which produced the U-2. Finally, it was CIA pursuit of a U-2 successor which led to the present OXCART and its broadened military applications. I hasten to assert with equal vehemance that without the full and sincere cooperation of the Air Force, none of these efforts could have proceeded as they did.

11. I have devoted the bulk of this report to the foregoing historical summary and personal assessment of the complimentary attributes of the Air Force and of CIA in the hope that it will contribute to a mutual understanding and agreement by my superiors that cooperation can exist again as it has in the past. However, until agreement is reached on the internal substance of the NRO, no amount of tinkering with the paper terms which define its external form can have much effect. There were, in fact, agreements within which people worked well on a project basis for the U-2, CORONA, and OXCART before NRO took form. At the high point in the NRO relationship, the [redacted] conference in 1962, the principals decided to modernize and unify this project level practice. Unfortunately this was not carried out.

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12. With this in mind, I presume to summarize and conclude from the preceding remarks as follows:

a. The contribution of the NRO appears to me to be more intangible than otherwise over at least the past year. Specifically, I believe the success of [redacted] to be due to special management arrangements taken by the Air Force which preceded and could be independent of the NRO. The U-2 and OXCART activities have continued in a fashion somewhat aside from the principal sphere of NRO interest. In the CORONA program, however, the NRO instituted measures, albeit controversial, to strengthen government management which was needed.

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b. The NRO as a concept should not be held solely responsible for the failure to establish wide personal rapport and amicable settlement of each of the individual issues that have arisen. The changes in senior personnel over the recent past few years, together with the prolongation of activities in which both Air Force and CIA hold an interest, may well have established a climate for these shortcomings in spite of NRO. On the other hand, the NRO in present form has not been able to surmount these obstacles.

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c. Finally, unless adventures in reconnaissance such as the U-2 and early CORONA are judged as once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, it is in the government interest to have the capability somewhere to recognize and exploit such situations. To me this means an "elite corps" task force led by an individual holding access to the highest levels of government. It means, in addition to the security and contracting techniques mentioned in paragraph 3, adherence to a philosophy that both industry and government personnel are equal teammates to get a job done rather than to the usual buyer-seller relationship. It means close attention to one project by the leading individual, not administration of several organizational components each involved with several of its own projects. It may mean disengagement after operational activities have reached a routine and regular status. Most important, it means access to substantial fiscal resources on spontaneous occasions. It means recognition of a dependence on and receipt of unstinting cooperation from the conventional resources of government to exploit such opportunities.

d. Whether my points of view are accepted or not is unimportant. It is important that their own agreement and unanimity be reached between senior officials on the substance of the NRO. I submit these remarks as a point of departure toward such understanding.

(Signed)
EUGENE P. KIEFER
Deputy Director
National Reconnaissance Office

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Eugene P. Kiefer's report on his tenure as DD/NRO from August 1963 to July 1964. He held on for a while after this report and actually terminated his position as DDNRO and his employment with CIA effective 18 February 1965.

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